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Call 1-800-THRUWAY

Thruway Fact Book

CONTENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Information • Introduction • The Thruway System • Operating Length • Design Criteria • Expressway Connections • Construction Cost • Travel Plazas • Tourism Information Centers • Traffic Regulations and Emergency Service • Road Condition Reports • TRANSsystem • Rest Areas/Park and Ride Lots • Toll Information • Why Tolls? • E-ZPass • Highway Speed E-ZPass • E-ZPass-On-the-Go • State Police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and Service • Maintenance • Environmental Stewardship • Official Thruway Openings • Tappan Zee Bridge • Tappan Zee Bridge Deck Replacement Project • Tappan Zee Bridge Falcon Program • Tappan Zee Bridge Toll Operations • Tappan Zee Bridge Maintenance • New York State Canal System • Canal Facts • Canal Tolls, Passes and Permits • Commercial Shipping on the Canal • The Cruising Guide to the New York State Canal System • Canalway Trail • Tugboat Unger Educational Program • Annual Events on the Canal |
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Contact Information

NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY/CANAL CORPORATION
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<http://www.thruway.ny.gov>

<http://www.canals.ny.gov>

<http://www.tzbsite.com>

<http://www.e-zpassny.com>

[Return to Contents](#)

Introduction

The Thruway Authority Act of 1950 provided geographical names for each of the Thruway's sections. These include Southern Westchester, Hudson, Catskill, Mohawk, Ontario, Erie, Berkshire, New England and Niagara. Subsequent legislation named these sections for old Native American trails: the Iroquois Trail (between New York City and Buffalo), the Erie Path (between Buffalo and the Pennsylvania border), the Mohican Path (the New England Section in Bronx and Westchester Counties), the Algonquin Path (the Berkshire Section in Albany, Rensselaer and Columbia Counties) and the Tuscarora Path (the Niagara Section in Erie and Niagara Counties).

In 1964, the New York State Legislature mandated that the Thruway System be named "The Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway," recognizing the former Governor's vision and leadership in sponsoring the creation of the cross-state superhighway.

The Thruway has been designated a part of the national network of Blue Star Memorial Highways honoring members of the U.S. Armed Forces who served in both World Wars. It is also part of the 43,000-mile network designated by Congress in 1990 as the "Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways."

[Return to Contents](#)

THE THRUWAY SYSTEM

| SECTION | MILES |
|--|------------------|
| THE MAINLINE (New York - Buffalo) | 426 miles |
| ERIE SECTION (Buffalo - Pennsylvania Line) | 70 miles |
| NIAGARA SECTION I-190 (Buffalo - Niagara Falls) | 21 miles |
| BERKSHIRE SECTION (Selkirk - Massachusetts Line) | 24 miles |
| NEW ENGLAND SECTION (I-95) (Bronx - Connecticut Line) | 15 miles |
| GARDEN STATE PARKWAY CONNECTION (Spring Valley - New Jersey) | 3 miles |
| CROSS WESTCHESTER EXPRESSWAY (I-287) (Mainline I-87 in Tarrytown - I-95 in Rye) | 11 miles |
| Total | 570 miles |

[Return to Contents](#)

OPERATING LENGTH COMPARED WITH OTHER EXPRESSWAYS

| SECTION | MILES |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| New York Thruway | 570 miles |
| Oklahoma Turnpike | 606 miles |
| Pennsylvania Turnpike | 531 miles |
| Ohio Turnpike | 241 miles |
| Florida Turnpike | 450 miles |
| Garden State Parkway (New Jersey) | 173 miles |
| Indiana Toll Road | 157 miles |
| New Jersey Turnpike | 148 miles |
| Massachusetts Turnpike | 138 miles |
| Connecticut Turnpike | 129 miles |

[Return to Contents](#)

Design Criteria

- The Thruway is generally a four-lane express highway with two lanes for traffic in either direction, separated by a wide median that ranges up to 1,025 feet in width. Six lanes are available in several higher-traffic regions, as are eight lanes.
- To the right of all highway areas is a stabilized shoulder on which vehicles, including the heaviest trucks, may be parked in the case of a breakdown or other emergency.
- There are no intersections at grade, no sharp curves and no steep hills on the Thruway.
- There are acceleration and deceleration lanes, generally 1,200 feet long, at all interchanges, Travel Plazas and parking areas.
- Sight distance of at least 1,000 feet is provided to eliminate any blind spots for fast-traveling motorists.

- Signs and/or advertising devices may not be posted or maintained within 660 feet of the nearest edge of the right-of-way, except with specific permission from the Thruway Authority.

[Return to Contents](#)

Expressway Connections

The Thruway is a key segment in the vast expressway network in the Northeast. The Thruway connects with:

- The Major Deegan Expressway at the New York City line, giving direct access south to midtown New York City.
- The [Connecticut Turnpike](#) at the terminus of the Thruway's New England Section (I-95) in Port Chester.
- The [Massachusetts Turnpike](#) at the terminus of the Thruway's Berkshire Section (I-90) in the Town of Canaan.
- Interstate 90, which heads west across the United States.
- New Jersey's Garden State Parkway at the New Jersey- New York line in Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County.
- Interstate 287, near Suffern in northern Rockland County, connecting with major highways in New Jersey.
- The Adirondack Northway, the northernmost segment of Interstate 87, which extends from Albany north to the Canadian border.
- Interstate 81, which extends from the Pennsylvania line near Binghamton north through Syracuse to the St. Lawrence River and Canada near Alexandria Bay.
- Interstate 88, near Schenectady on the Thruway, extends to Binghamton.

[Return to Contents](#)

Construction Cost

The Thruway cost about \$1 billion to build. Costs were relatively low through upstate farmland and higher in heavily populated areas. The cost per mile from New York City to the Pennsylvania line was \$1,547,000; with the exception of the 15-mile New England Section, which cost an average of \$6,210,000 per mile; and the 21-mile Niagara Section, which cost an average of \$5,738,000 per mile.

**CONSTRUCTION COST
COMPARED WITH OTHER EXPRESSWAYS**

| SECTION | PER-MILE COST |
|--|---------------|
| Connecticut Turnpike | \$3,449,000 |
| New Jersey Turnpike | \$2,200,000 |
| Pennsylvania Turnpike (Delaware Extension) | \$1,970,000 |
| Northern Indiana Toll Road | \$1,790,000 |
| Garden State Parkway | \$1,720,000 |
| Massachusetts Turnpike | \$1,600,000 |
| Thruway, New York to Pennsylvania Line | \$1,547,000 |
| Ohio Turnpike | \$1,352,000 |
| Pennsylvania Turnpike (early construction) | \$736,000 |

[Return to Contents](#)

Travel Plazas

The [Thruway's 27 Travel Plazas](#), many of them award-winning facilities, offer a variety of restaurants and other services designed to serve Thruway visitors for years to come.

The Travel Plazas are fun and memorable places to stop, with buildings reflecting New York State architecture such as Adirondack lodges, Shaker meeting halls and Hudson River Valley train stations. The Thruway Travel Plazas offer a wide variety of food as well as competitive fuel prices. In addition, Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are available, as are tourist information centers and kiosks, gift shops, Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi), travel safety information, and up-to-date weather and traffic conditions.

All of the Travel Plazas offer family-assist restrooms, allowing people with special needs to get help from a traveling companion in total privacy. Travel Plazas are now fully accessible to travelers with special needs. Also, parents will find diaper changing areas in both men's and women's restrooms.

Travel Plazas are strategically located about every 30 to 40 miles along the Thruway. All gasoline stations at Thruway Travel Plazas have self-service islands. Upon request, people with disabilities and other travelers who so desire may receive full-service assistance at self-service pumps at self-serve prices.

[Return to Contents](#)

Tourism Information Centers

Staffed tourism information centers are located at several Travel Plazas and interchanges along the Thruway System. At these centers, Thruway travelers may obtain literature about destinations and attractions in New York State, Thruway maps and directional assistance. Some information centers operate all year; others are seasonal. All information centers at Travel Plazas operate daily from May 1 to October 31, some longer. Highway signs showing "?" and/or "Tourist Info" legends are posted along the Thruway for information centers that are open eight hours a day, seven days a week at Travel Plazas, interchanges or within one mile of a Thruway interchange. View a list of [Travel Plaza Tourism Information Centers](#).

[Return to Contents](#)

Traffic Regulations And Emergency Service

- Posted speed limits are enforced by State Police Troop T, whose members patrol the Thruway exclusively.
- U-turns are prohibited, except when authorized by State Police or Thruway personnel.
- Do not park in driving lanes, on or under bridges, or in the center median.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers. Both hitchhikers and motorists picking them up are subject to arrest, as New York State law prohibits hitchhiking.
- Pedestrians, bicycles, motor scooters, ATVs, horse-drawn vehicles, snowmobiles and mopeds are all prohibited on the Thruway.
- Keep right except for passing and signal before changing lanes.
- Trucks, buses and vehicles hauling trailers are barred from the left lane on three-lane sections.
- Trucks traveling less than 40 miles per hour must use their flashing lights to warn other vehicles of their slower speed.
- New York State law requires seat belt use and that headlights be turned on when windshield wipers are used.
- Do not stop in the travel lanes with a disabled vehicle. Move well off the roadway, or to the next exit or other safe location. New York State law permits motorists to move vehicles to a safe spot following an accident or breakdown. For your own safety, stay with your vehicle until help arrives. It is illegal to walk along the Thruway.
- For the safety of all Thruway travelers, only authorized Thruway contract garages are allowed to service disabled vehicles on the Thruway. Minor repairs include tire changes, battery boosts, and supplying fuel, oil, water and/or anti-freeze. Thruway fuel stations no longer offer this roadside service.
- Authorized off-Thruway garages handle towing and major repairs that cannot be done along the Thruway. They also provide both roadside and major repairs on the Niagara, New England and I-287 sections.
- A standard roadside service charge prevails 24 hours a day on the Thruway. Labor and materials are additional. These rates are comparable to off-Thruway rates.

- Towing charges by authorized garages for towing are based on initial hook-up and subsequent miles towed and are competitive with off-Thruway prices.

[Return to Contents](#)

Road Condition Reports

Thruway road condition reports are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling toll-free 1-800-THRUWAY (1-800-847-8929). Reports are updated as conditions change along the 570-mile superhighway.

[Return to Contents](#)

TRANSsystem

In August 2006 the Authority launched the Transportation Regional Advisory Network System (*TRANSsystem*). This free* network of services provides motorists a combination of current and plan-ahead traveler information is delivered through a variety of mechanisms, including for the first time on the Thruway, email alerts (*TRANSalerts*). The *TRANSsystem* has been designed to provide customers with real-time traffic, weather, construction and emergency information.

Thruway patrons can sign up to receive *TRANSalerts* via e-mail or text message. The service also offers a "hold" feature which allows commuters to suspend the alerts while on vacation or allow the occasional traveler to only receive alerts when planning and/or taking a trip.

In addition, the *TRANSsystem* provides current, up-to-date traffic and traveler information including unscheduled construction and emergency information on the Authority's homepage. The Authority continues to post emergency information on the Highway Advisory Radio (HAR), 1-800-THRUWAY and Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) along the entire system.

* While the Authority offers this service free-of-charge to subscribers, fees for text messages may apply depending on the subscriber's text messaging provider. Customers are encouraged to contact their mobile service providers to find out how text messaging works with their personal mobile devices.

For more information about *TRANSsystem* and the 1-800-THRUWAY information line, or to sign up for the *TRANSalerts*, please visit the Authority's website at www.thruway.ny.gov/tas/.

[Return to Contents](#)

Rest Areas/Park And Ride Lots

There are conveniently located parking areas along the Thruway System where travelers are invited to stop and rest during their trips. All of these areas have public telephones.

The Thruway Authority does offer several commuter Park and Ride lots across the System. Parking at these commuter lots is posted for a maximum stay of 16 hours, and are not designated for multiple day stays. There are no overnight or long-term parking facilities on the System.

For a complete listing of Park and Ride lots, [please visit our traveler's section](#).

[Return to Contents](#)

Toll Information

Tolls along the Thruway can be calculated using the [On-Line Toll and Distance Calculator](#).

The controlled system is from Interchange 15 to 50 and from Interchange 55 to 61. Outside the controlled or ticket system, fixed tolls are collected at barriers across the Thruway.

An [annual permit](#) for use on the ticketed portion of the Thruway is available through [E-ZPass](#) for a passenger car, motorcycle, or van with two axles and four tires. The permit plan is also available for vehicles displaying U.S. government license plates that meet the same vehicle classification. The permit includes the first 30 miles per trip, with the exception of a 57-cent surcharge for the Castleton-on-Hudson Bridge on the Berkshire Section. Trips taken for more than the 30-mile limit, a full-fare toll is charged beyond the first 30 miles, with a minimum per trip charge of 15 cents. [Commuter E-ZPass plans](#) are also available for those who regularly travel on the Tappan Zee Bridge or Grand Island Bridge, or through the New Rochelle, Yonkers and Harriman Toll Barriers.

[Return to Contents](#)

Why Tolls?

The Thruway is strictly a user-supported System. Only those who travel the Thruway pay for it. The Thruway Authority receives no State tax dollars and is therefore dependent on toll revenues to operate, maintain and police its roads and bridges. These revenues also allow the Authority to provide a superior level of maintenance with its Snow-And-Ice Control Program.

Because tolls are a dedicated revenue source, the Authority is able to provide travelers with a safe, well-maintained and convenient transportation system with superior customer service. The Thruway is among the safest superhighways in the nation, with a fatality rate one-fifth the national average.

In 1991, an independent task force, following two years of public hearings, issued a recommendation that Thruway tolls remain. It was an issue of tolls versus taxes, with tolls perceived as being more equitable since tolls are direct user fees.

In 1989 (Chapter 634), Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature created the Thruway Authority Transition Advisory Council and charged it with the responsibility to "make recommendations concerning the future of the Thruway and the Thruway Authority after the scheduled retirement of the Authority's bondable debt in the year 1996..."

The Advisory Council concluded that tolls were the preferable choice because it was more appropriate for those who actually use the Thruway to pay for its maintenance and upkeep rather than the taxpayers of New York generally. Therefore the Advisory Council recommended to the Legislature and the Governor, that tolls be maintained and that the Authority, with its bonding ability, be retained to meet the highway transportation needs along the Thruway corridor.

Instead of making the Thruway toll free and returning operation to DOT, in 1992, the Governor and the State Legislature enacted legislation to further expand the responsibilities of the Authority to include the operation and maintenance of the canal system and authorized additional indebtedness secured by toll revenues to assist with the financing of this new responsibility.

Unlike other highways in New York State, the Thruway Authority receives no state tax dollars. As a toll road, only the people who use the Thruway pay for it. In addition, an estimated one-third of all vehicles using the Thruway are from out-of-state.

[Return to Contents](#)

E-ZPass

The New York State Thruway Authority pioneered the use of electronic toll collection in the Northeast when it introduced [E-ZPass](#) to travelers in 1993.

The Thruway Authority is a founding member of the 14-state, 25 agency E-ZPass Interagency Group formed in 1990 with the intention of bringing a single-tag electronic toll collection system to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Toll authorities in many neighboring states have since joined the group.

The E-ZPass system was designed as a traffic management tool to ease congestion and make travel more convenient. While all Toll Plaza lanes are equipped to accept E-ZPass,

most plazas offer non-stop "E-ZPass Only" lanes, which eliminate the need to wait in line with cash-paying customers.

With E-ZPass, tolls are either pre-paid or post-paid depending on the vehicle and account types. A tag mounted on the vehicle interacts with computers and the appropriate toll is calculated as the vehicle passes through the Toll Plaza. E-ZPass customers, passenger and commercial vehicles, receive a discount on Thruway tolls.

[Return to Contents](#)

Highway Speed E-ZPass

In January 2007, the Authority activated its first [Highway Speed E-ZPass](#) facility for commercial motorists along the Thruway at the Spring Valley Toll Barrier, in Rockland County. This major milestone was a step forward in the Authority's ongoing effort to improve customer service along the Thruway. Commercial E-ZPass customers who previously had to pull off the highway to pay their toll at Spring Valley are now able to safely bypass the Toll Plaza and electronically pay their toll while traveling at highway speed.

Additionally, in late 2007, Contract 1 work at the [Woodbury Toll Barrier](#) was completed. In April 2008, Contract 2 was awarded to Yonkers Contracting Company. Contract 2 involves most of the highway and toll booth components necessary to implement highway speed E-ZPass. The majority of the project is expected to be completed in 2009 with the remaining finish work to be completed in 2010.

[Return to Contents](#)

E-ZPass-On-The-Go

Introduced in 2004, the [E-ZPass-On-the-Go](#) Program has made obtaining an E-ZPass more convenient for Thruway motorists. E-ZPass On-the-Go tags are available at more than 580 locations throughout the state including several gift shops located in Thruway travel plazas.

Upon purchasing an On-the-Go tag, customers will receive the full \$25 towards their E-ZPass account. E-ZPass provides a savings of 5 percent off the cash rate on all Thruway tolls for passenger vehicles. On-the-Go tags are only available for passenger vehicle use. Customers must register the On-the-Go tag within the first 48 hours of using the tag.

[Return to Contents](#)

State Police

The members that make up [State Police Troop T](#) patrol the New York State Thruway System exclusively. Night and day, Troop T members do emergency work at the scene of accidents, summon help for thousands of motorists with disabled vehicles and make more than 197,000 arrests each year.

The entire annual cost for Troop T's services is more than \$50 million per year and is borne by the Thruway Authority, which pays the Troopers' salaries, payroll benefits and expenses and provides them with patrol cars, uniforms and other necessary equipment.

State Police Troop T makes approximately 99,000 arrests each year on the Thruway for speeding. Radar teams, low-profile vehicles and aerial speed enforcement efforts supplement regular patrols.

A Thruway communications system provides instantaneous communication 24 hours a day among Authority Headquarters, tollbooths, and the hundreds of vehicles operated by Troopers, administrators, maintenance and emergency service crews, and toll personnel.

All communications are centralized at Authority Headquarters in Albany. The communications center is staffed by shifts around the clock with a force of civilian dispatchers, senior dispatchers and State Police technical sergeants. The Authority's Communications Supervisor oversees technical operations.

[Return to Contents](#)

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